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ABSTRACT

This resource book is intended to aid parents of children aged 2 to 5 years in teaching geography. The book offers ideas about how to encourage and give direction to enable young children to develop the vocabulary, awareness, and curiosity necessary to lay the foundation for the study of geography. Suggested activities are included and are organized around five specific themes. The themes are: (1) "Where are things located?" (2)"What characteristics make a place special?" (3) "What are the relationships among people and places?" (4) "What are the patterns of movement of people, products, and information?" and (5) "How can the Earth be divided into regions for study?" Each chapter begins with background, examples of questions geographers ask, and explanations of the early developmental skills that are involved. A 16-item reference list and glossary conclude the book, along with maps, a resource list with suggestions of where to get free maps, and a list of easy reading or picture books related to geography. (LB)

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Early Childhood: Where Learning Begins

Geography

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Early Childhood: Where Learning Begins

Geography

with activities for children ages 2 to 5 years of age

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Introduction

It's a cool day. A mother is walking her children around the neighborhood. They are all wearing hats and coats. The toddler jumps and runs; then stops to pick up an acorn. A squirrel runs by and climbs up the tree. They all watch and then the toddler imitates the squirrel's walk. A car is parked nearby. The children see a picture of a crab on the license plate. In a minute they are at the corner where the sign says STOP. They cross the street and put a letter in the mailbox and then walk up the street to buy some fruit at the grocery store.

Although they don't know it, this mother is helping her children learn geography. The children are beginning to understand the nature of the world and their place in it. The acorn was not on the ground a month ago. It's new on this trip! Acorns fall from trees that grow in their neighborhood, and that means fall is coming. When they pick up the acorn or leaves, they make the ground neater. The squirrel lives here too, and runs and jumps in a special way that children can imitate in their own homes. Cars move people from one place to another; and mailboxes move information. Cars and street signs use symbols or pictures that tell people where they are, or where they are from. The neighborhood is divided into regions—some for houses, some for stores.

Young children learn through their senses and experiences. They touch, feel, smell, and taste things. They run and jump and climb. They play imaginary games, and they ask a million questions. In an everyday walk these children are beginning to understand how people relate to the Earth, how they change the environment, how weather changes the character of a place, and how one place relates to another through the movement of people, things, and ideas. Children's everyday play and experiences give them the basis for the geographic knowledge that they will learn in school. With just a little encouragement and some direction, young children will develop the vocabulary, awareness, and curiosity that will help them better understand and learn geography.

With this book we hope you as parents will get ideas that will use your children's play to help them learn more geography—the study of the Earth and its human, animal, and plant population. Most of the suggestions in this book are geared to children from 2 to 5 years of age. Parents of children with disabilities can use the activities in this book, although some may have to be adapted. Keep in mind that all youngsters vary widely in their development. Children may find any of the activities appropriate.

The activities and games are organized around five specific themes that help focus our thinking. These themes were developed by professional geographers and are now being used in many schools. They are:

1. Where are things **located**?
2. What characteristics make a **place** special?
3. What are the **relationships** among people and places?
4. What are the patterns of **movement** of people, products, and information?
5. How can the Earth be divided into **regions** for study?

Each chapter begins with some background, examples of questions geographers ask, and some explanations of the early developmental skills that are involved. Next, there are two sets of activities—one for children ages 2 to 3 and a second set for children ages 4 to 5. These activities will help children gain the skills that lay the foundation for the study of geography.

Where Is It?

The first theme geographers use is **location**. This tells us exactly where in the world something is. Just as your home has a street address, every place has a "global address" identified by latitude and longitude. If you know these numbers and how to use them, you can find any place in the world and give its absolute location. (For definitions, see the glossary at the end of this booklet.)

Geographers also ask why things are located in particular places. How do these places influence our lives? For example, Baltimore, Maryland, was founded at 39.3° (degrees) North latitude and 76.6° (degrees) West longitude on an inland harbor. It is a major shipping port for the eastern seaboard with direct land routes by train and highway to cities throughout the United States. Many people who live in Baltimore are involved in waterfront activities such as shipping, loading, and fishing.

Very young children will not be able to understand concepts like latitude and longitude, or even left and right. However, young children learn body awareness—the shape of the body and how much space it takes up, where the different body parts are, how the body moves and rests, how the voice is a part of the body. This is the beginning of an understanding of location.

Young children learn that they relate to other people and physical things. To help young children learn location, make sure they know the color and style of the building in which they live, the name of their town, and their street address. Then, when you talk about other places, they have something of their own with which to compare.

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Activities

Direction

Concepts of location begin early in life. By age 2, children are able to distinguish between objects that are near and can be grasped, and those that are farther away. They can notice features of their immediate surroundings, such as the bedroom or yard.

The idea of direction is a difficult concept. Children develop the concept of direction through experiences such as climbing, jumping, running, and rolling around. Children need to physically experience themselves in space. First, children need to develop body awareness; to understand where their body is in a room, including its size and level (upright, crawling or stooping, or on the floor); how the body's different parts are put together with wriggling wrists and wobbling ankles, and how to move in directions like forward, backward, or sideways. When they know how their body moves, they will have the basis for learning precise directions and locations later in life. The more opportunities children have to run and move about, the greater their ability to keep track of position and location.

Children with disabilities have a special need to experience space, direction, and location. Even when using a wheelchair, children can play simple dancing games that help them orient themselves in space. They can take field trips into the community and use maps to follow directions.

Ages 2–3

- Give toddlers a lot of opportunities to run about and explore their environment.
- Babies love to play "So Big." When you ask them how big they are they raise their hands over their heads and everyone says, "so big." Now that they are older, ask toddlers to make themselves very tall or very small by standing on tip toes, or stooping down.
- Have toddlers play at moving in different directions, like backward, forward, or sideways. A simple game to play is "Mother, May I." To play, stand at the opposite end of a room from your children. Take turns having them ask, "Mother, may I"... jump two steps... or hop quickly... or take one big step. After you say, "Yes, you may," they take the requested steps. The first to reach you is the winner.

- Give toddlers discarded cardboard boxes to climb in and out of, get under, put things in, and play with. Talk about what they are doing: "Where are you? Oh, you are *under* the box!" Parents can participate too. "Daddy's feet are in the box!"
- Let your toddler play with pots and pans or plastic kitchen containers, fitting them together and putting them away. They will become familiar with shapes and sizes, as well as concepts like *in* and *on*.
- Children need to understand positional words. You can teach these by involving them in household tasks. Teach children a lot of positional words like *above* and *below* in a natural way when you talk with them or give them directions. When picking up toys to put away say, "Please put your toys *into* the yellow basket" or "Put the green washcloth *into* the drawer." Words that describe features such as color, size, and shape are also important.
- When looking through books, point out where objects are, like a teddy bear sitting *on* the bed.

Ages 4–5

Ideas of direction develop gradually through preschoolers' experiences. Try some of the following activities to introduce terms of direction:

- Use words *left* and *right* in connection with real situations. Play circle games like "Sally Go Round the Moon" or "The Hokey Pokey." "Start with your *right* foot." To make this easier, you can put a felt marker dot, or a bracelet or string, on one of your child's hands. Find ways to modify the games for children with disabilities so they can experience themselves in space.
- When you go somewhere, use directional terms. "We'll turn right here." "Shawndra's house is three blocks from us, so we have to look for the gas station. That is where we turn left."
- You can get your child to understand ideas like north, south, east, and west, by pointing out that the kitchen is always sunny in the mornings because it faces east and that is where the sun comes up. Or, you might sit on the stoop to catch the afternoon sun because the sun sets in the west.

- Help increase your children's vocabulary by using pictures from books and magazines so they can associate words with visual images. A picture of a desert can get you started talking about the features of a desert—not much water, not many green trees. Talk with your children to help them find more detailed words to describe different natural and cultural features.
- When you go outside, look back at your home and ask your children to point to where they live. Can they find their room? When you walk across the street, look back and ask again if they can point to their home.
- On a walk around your neighborhood point out other signs that indicate location. There are street signs and numbers on apartments and homes. Ask your children how a friend would find your home if they didn't have a number or street name.

Maps

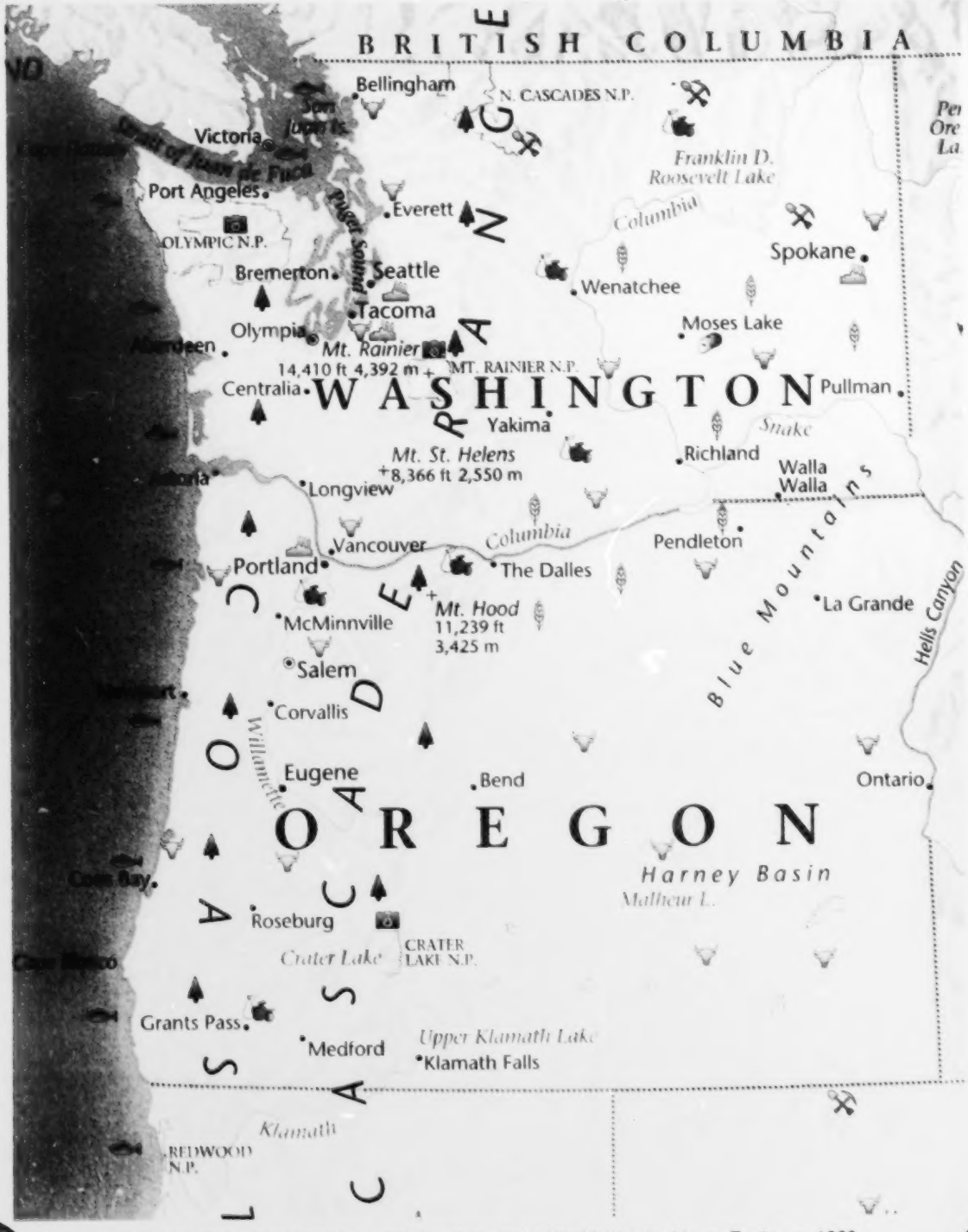
Maps represent the real world. Young children won't fully understand maps until they are much older. However, without a foundation from their own experiences, children will not develop into successful map readers or users when they are older. Personal experience helps children understand maps and how they use symbols, which can be introduced to children when they are quite young.

Before children can learn to use maps, they must understand that maps are tools to help us find where we are and where we are going. They need to know that maps and globes use other symbols and the concept of scale. They are pictures from a "bird's eye view," and reduce the size of an actual place.

Map Icons

Our regional maps have little pictures, or icons, that tell you what kinds of crops, farm animals, industries, and other economic activities are common in each region. Sometimes the icon has a label that identifies it more specifically. Below is the key to those icons.

National Geographic Society. *National Geographic World Atlas for Young Explorers*. 1998.



National Geographic Society. *National Geographic World Atlas for Young Explorers*. 1998.

National Geographic Society. *National Geographic World Atlas for Young Explorers*. 1998.

Ages 2–3

- Toddlers can't use maps. But they can become familiar with the idea that maps help people locate themselves in space. Just as they know that books have symbols that represent words, they can understand that maps and globes have symbols that represent things in the physical world. Symbols have meaning. Colors, lines, and markings on a map stand for something.
- Let your children see you reading maps and using globes. They should become familiar objects in your home.
- Keep a globe or a map of the United States near the television and use it to locate places talked about on television programs, or to follow the travels of your favorite sports team. Very young children won't be able to fully understand globes, but they will become familiar objects.
- Point out signs that indicate location. In a store or other public place there will be entrance and exit signs, and signs that indicate stairs, escalators, and elevators. Many signs use symbols. Point them out and talk about them. In elevators or other places, show children how people with visual impairments use Braille signs.
- Look at videos or photographs of yourself and your children. Point out how much smaller everyone looks than they really are. A map is like a photograph. A photograph represents you, only it is smaller. A map represents a large area, but it is small.
- Give children all kinds of blocks and boxes with which to play. You can put paper signs on blocks to show where the toy store or their house would be. When they pretend that the blocks represent objects, they are beginning to understand how people use symbols.

Ages 4–5

- By the time children are four and five years old some can use a simple map to locate an object. They understand that maps represent reality. They also can develop beginning ideas of scale, symbols, and perspective, and the idea that maps are tools people use to locate themselves in space. Put your child's natural curiosity to work. Even small children can learn to read simple diagrams or plans of their homes, or maps of their bedrooms, school, neighborhood, and community.

- When your children play with toy trucks and cars they are learning the use of symbols. Take advantage of this opportunity, and either draw a rough map of a highway, a city, or a park over which they can run their trucks, or pretend that things around your house are trees or fields.
- Point to symbols you use in your daily life. For example, you stop at a red light, and go on the green. Red means stop, green means go.
- If you are upstairs in a building, look out the window and ask your children how the world below looks. Is it small? The higher up you go, the smaller things on the ground appear, just like looking at a map.
- Before taking a trip, use a map to show your children where you are going and how you plan to get there. On the map, point out other routes you could take and talk about why you decided to use a particular route.
- Encourage children to draw and make their own maps. They can draw make believe maps of places they have visited or just imagined. They can use felt markers—but let them use blocks and milk cartons as well, for a three-dimensional approach. Children may build, draw, or paint maps well before they are able to read them.
- Go on a walk and collect natural materials such as acorns and leaves to use for an art project. Map the location where you found those items.
- Many games use maps of journeys. Some libraries will lend games as well as books.
- If you go for a walk in a state or national park, get a map of the pathways and let your child carry it around and "consult" it.
- Work jigsaw puzzles of the United States or the world. Through the placement of puzzle pieces, children can feel and see where one place is located in relation to others.

What Is It Like?

The second theme used by geographers is the theme of **place**. Every place has a personality. Just like people, places may have a lot in common, but no two are exactly alike. We can learn a lot about the people and the physical characteristics of any given place.

What makes a place special? What are the physical and human characteristics of your hometown? Is the soil sandy or rocky? Is the temperature warm or is it cold? Did important historical events occur there? Do you live near a river or lake? What physical features are most important or different from other places?

What about the people? How do they affect the characteristics of a place? What is their language, what do they believe in, what do their houses and buildings look like? What type of work do they do? All of these features define the special character of a place.

When your children learn about the trees, roads, and buildings that make up their neighborhood and city, they see that where they live is special. Young children can learn to name the physical traits of the places in which they live, naming the landforms, bodies of water, soil, plants, weather, and climate in their immediate surroundings from their own point of view.

What Is My Home Like?

Early experiences can increase children's awareness of the world around them. Learning about geography begins with children's ability to notice, examine, and think about their own environment. As very young children have direct experiences in their home and immediate environment, they will be able to build more accurate concepts of the Earth. These experiences will be useful when children move to the next stage of thinking.

Ages 2–3

- Toddlers learn about the world through their senses. By playing in water, sand, dirt, and even mud, they will learn about the physical characteristics of their home. By pointing out to them differences and similarities between your home and that of your friends or relatives, you will help them notice the human characteristics of home.

- Point out the special features of your home. Do you live in an apartment building with long halls, or in a house with a porch? Do most people walk everywhere, or do they drive? Are the buildings all the same color or many different colors? Baltimore has rows of houses with marble steps; New Orleans has houses with second floor porches; Arizona has houses that are only one story; farmhouses are near barns and silos. How do you describe the place where you live?

- A small pile of sand is enough to keep toddlers busy for a long time. Give them plastic containers with or without lids, old plastic bottles, spoons, scoops, a sieve, and a few small pots and pans. Feeling the sand or water pour through their fingers, pouring it from one container to another, watching it sift through the holes in a sieve, children are learning about their world.

- Young children are fascinated by water play. By playing with water, children learn its properties—it pours, it can be contained, it can be squirted. You can make water even more interesting by adding a few drops of bubble bath or soap suds. The bubbles will keep children interested. When you are bathing them, let them play in the bathtub, and help them describe the way the water feels and how it acts.

- Use songs to teach geography. "Home on the Range," "Red River Valley," and "This Land Is Your Land" bring to mind images of a place. Children enjoy folk songs of different countries like "Sur La Pont D'Avignon," "Guantanamara," and "London Bridge." They can even play the game of London Bridge Is Falling Down.

Ages 4–5

- Walk around your neighborhood, looking at what is there and talking about it. Describe the surfaces on which you walk—"the grass feels soft," "concrete is hard, so cars can drive on it," "gravel feels bumpy under our feet." Encourage children to use their senses to become aware of the things that make up their world.
- As you walk with your children, point out the different types of houses, porches, sidewalks, and even streets. Play "I Spy" by saying, "I spy something red" and then have your children look around to find what you are "spying." When one of them guesses correctly, he or she can become the "spy" and think of something for you to find.
- Look at the soil, plants, insects, birds, and other animal life. Ask what things you find most often in your neighborhood. What does the soil look like? Are there rocks and pebbles? Look at their shape, color, and size and describe them.
- How many birds and animals can you find in your neighborhood? Where do they live? Discuss what they might eat.
- Encourage your children to role play and don't be afraid to participate with them. You can pretend you are explorers walking on rocks over a make-believe creek. Have them hop on imaginary camels and wander into the kitchen-oasis for a glass of water.

What Is the Weather Today?

The weather is an important part of the character of a place. The amount of sun or rain, heat or cold, the direction and strength of the wind, all determine such things as how people dress, how well crops grow, and the extent to which people will want to live in a particular spot. Join your children in observing weather conditions.

Ages 2–3

- As you dress your children in the morning talk about the sunshine or rain, the heat or the cold, and how they need to dress for the weather.
- Bundle up and take your toddler for a walk when it is windy, raining, or snowing. Talk about the experience—about how it felt to be outside, how you dressed for it, what the weather did to your clothes. What did the wind feel like? What did the rain smell like? Was the snow soft, and was it cold? How did things outside look different when the sun was shining?
- Take a pinwheel outside, listen to a wind chime, or fly a kite. Let your children tell you what happened when they took their weather toy outside.

Ages 4–5

- Look at a large outdoor thermometer together and talk about what the temperature tells us about the day.
- Watch the weather forecast on television or read the weather map in the newspaper. Reading the weather map helps children observe changes in the local climate.
- Use a weather map in the daily paper to look up the temperatures of cities around the world and discover how hot some get in the summer and how cold some get in the winter. Look up the temperature in several cities, and have your children guess what that temperature might be. "It's 45 degrees here in New York City. What do you think the temperature is in Florida today?" Compare these figures with your town. Ask your children if they can think of reasons why different locations have different temperatures. Many children enjoy finding the place that is the hottest or the coldest.
- Watch cloud formations and make your own predictions. Will it rain? Will the weather change tomorrow? What do the clouds look like? Don't be afraid to guess, and then check your prediction later in the day.

How Do We Adjust To Where We Live?

How do people adjust to their environment? How do people change the environment to better suit their needs? Geographers examine where people live, why they settled there, and how they use natural resources. For example, traveling Bushmen in Australia carry water in ostrich eggs because water is so scarce in their environment. In other places we turn up the heat or put on a sweater when it gets cold. All people change something about the way they live in order to adapt to their environment.

Throughout early childhood, children become increasingly aware of how people and the Earth **interact**. They know and experience how the weather and climate affect their daily lives. Toddlers are just beginning to understand the world in which they live. Parents often try to get them to understand what they need to do to adapt to their surroundings, like wear a jacket when it is cold, or take off their socks when it is hot outside. By ages 4 and 5, children are beginning to learn what they can do to adjust, and they are beginning to see how people change the Earth to their own benefit.

Ages 2–3

- Toddlers think of themselves as the center of the world. The daily routines of dressing, eating, and playing are the basis for learning how the Earth affects them, and how they adapt to their environment.
- Daily routines help toddlers make sense of their world. With routines they learn that morning is followed by afternoon, and night follows day. As stable as their routines are, changes will occur. These changes occur because of rain, wind, storms, or other weather conditions. Point this out to them. "We can't go out today because of the ice and someone could slip, fall, and get hurt" or "The weather is so nice today, let's take our lunch to the park and have a picnic."
- Add a squirt bottle of water to the sand pile so children can become aware that they have some control over the Earth. Within limits they can adapt things to their needs. Show them how to make sand pies by packing containers with wet sand and dumping out a sand pie or cake. They can create mountains and then count them. Remember, they are developing an awareness of how to control their environment.

Ages 4–5

- When going through your neighborhood, name the different types of houses you find. Distinguish between 1-story, 2-story, and multi-story houses. You might see apartments, duplexes, townhouses, single family houses, trailers, or farm houses. When you go on a trip, point out dwellings that are different from those in your neighborhood.
- Animals need shelter too. Point out animal homes such as birds' and squirrels' nests, ant hills, beehives, and barns.
- Nearly everywhere people are building something. Stop to watch and observe how earth is moved and buildings go up. What materials are being used? Are builders using the stones that are found in your neighborhood, or are they making concrete out of sand and cement?
- Move the furniture around in your child's room and talk about how you are changing how he or she uses the space.
- Plant flowers in either a window box or a garden and water them together with your child. Talk about why the plants need water. What happens if you forget to water the plants?
- If you live in an urban area, try to visit a nearby farm. Some cities and states maintain farm parks for just this purpose. Call the Department of Parks or Recreation in your area to find one near you. Talk with your children about how farmers use natural resources—soil, water, and sun—to grow crops and raise livestock. How do they keep livestock from wandering off? How do they prevent crops from being eaten by birds or destroyed by disease?

- Spend the day outside with your children. If possible, go camping. It is easy to understand why we wear long pants and shoes when there are rocks and branches on the ground. In the woods, with no plumbing and indoor water, it will be clear why early settlers found it so important to be near water.

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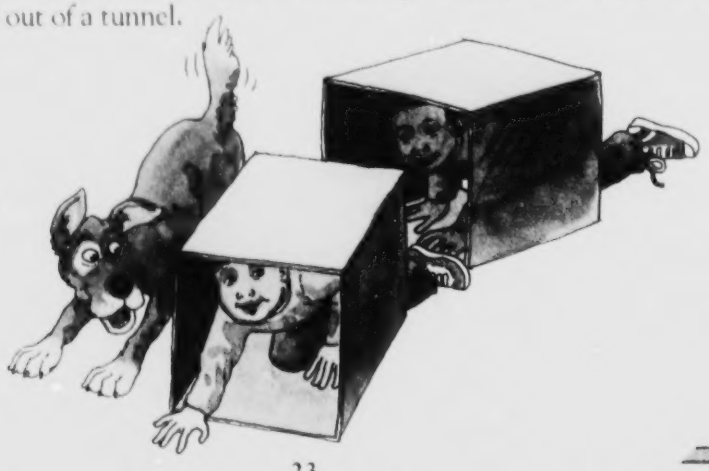
How Do People, Things, and Ideas Move From One Place To Another?

The study of geography includes learning how people, products, and information **move** from one place to another. People all over the world travel everyday to go to work, go to school, and see relatives. Products like sugar and coffee are shipped from country to country. Information is communicated via telephones, televisions, faxes, and computers. Understanding movement helps your children see that people all over the world need each other for many things.

How Do People and Things Move?

Ages 2–3

- Toddlers are expert travelers. In their attempt to learn what they can do and what the world is all about, toddlers climb over, under, and into nearly everything. They crawl, run, and walk around everything else. Let them play on wheel toys, wagons, and push and pull toys.
- Ask them how many different ways they can move. They can go fast or slow. They can crawl, hop, jump, or slither like a snake.
- Make a tunnel for children to crawl through. Cut both ends out of a couple of cardboard boxes, turn the boxes over and line them up. Toddlers will enjoy crawling into, through, and out of a tunnel.



- Give toddlers something to ride. A variety of vehicles with a seat and no pedals—some in the shape of animals—are available for toddlers who push themselves around with their feet. Pull your children in a wagon.
- Children with physical disabilities also need to experience movement. All children can have opportunities to travel by car, bus, or the back of a bicycle. If possible, take other forms of transportation such as airplanes, trains, subways, boats, ferries, barges, and horses and carriages. Take a map with you.
- Toy trains with tracks and other wheeled toys are good ways to play traveling.
- When you give your child a bath, blow or push toy boats to move them to different places. Use sponges or washcloths as make-believe islands.

Ages 4–5

- Go around your house and look at where things come from. Examine the labels of the clothes you wear and the food you eat. Talk about where they come from. Why do some bananas come from Central America? Why does milk come from the local dairy? Perhaps your climate is too cold for bananas. The milk will spoil if it is not refrigerated for too long, so it can't travel far. How did the food get to your house?
- When you are outside, ask your children to watch animals traveling. Find animals that fly, swim, crawl under or over the ground, run, jump, and hop. Organize your findings. Count the number of animals you saw that moved in each way.
- Children who are just learning to use their bodies in space can imitate other forms of travel. They can hop like a rabbit, jump like a squirrel, slither like a snake. They can climb a chair and pretend it is a train or a plane.
- Have your children ask older relatives what their world was like when they were young. They can ask questions about transportation, heating and refrigeration, the foods they ate, the clothes they wore, and the schools they attended. Look at old pictures. How have things changed since Grandma was a child? Grandparents and great aunts and uncles are usually delighted to share their memories with the younger generation, and they can pass on a wealth of information.
- Make milk carton boats to float in the bath tub or nearby pond.

How Do Ideas Travel?

Many ideas come from beyond our immediate surroundings. How do they get to us? Information moves from one person to another through telephones, mail, television, radio, faxes, and computers. Even posters, bumper stickers, and graffiti communicate ideas.

Ages 2–3

- Two-year-olds learn that ideas and information travel. Teach your children to talk on the telephone with Mommy or Daddy at work or Grandma who lives in another house. They need to learn to say "hello" and "goodbye," and to learn that the person at the other end of the line cannot see them, so they must use words to communicate.
- Give toddlers a lot of paper, crayons, and markers so they can send messages to others. Their early scribbles are without form, but as they get older the letters and pictures may become clearer.
- Toddlers see the mail being delivered. They can scribble on paper and give you their pictures to mail to Grandpa.

Ages 4–5

- By watching television and listening to the radio, your children will receive ideas from the outside world. Where do the television shows they watch come from? What about radio shows?
- Encourage children to communicate with friends and relatives. They can dictate letters to them, or send them pictures. They can talk with them on the telephone.
- Go around your house and count all the different "communications systems." There are the more obvious things like a telephone, a radio, and a television set. You might even have a computer or an intercom. Count the mailbox, as well as the newspaper, magazines, and books from which you get information. Don't forget pens and pencils.

There Is So Much In the World. How Can We Look At It All?

Because there are so many things to study and so much to look at, geographers divide the world into physical, cultural, and economic **regions**. A region is an area that includes a number of places, all of which have something in common. Physical regions may have a particular type of climate, natural feature, or plant life. A cultural region has some common culture and history that distinguish it from other nearby regions. In some areas, people speak the same language, observe the same holidays, practice similar religions, or share a political identity. An economic region may be known by what is made and exported from an area.

What Do I Do Here?

Toddlers can learn about the regions in their own home and neighborhood. We use certain areas for different purposes. There are areas with water, like bathrooms and kitchens, or areas with beds like bedrooms. Many children over 4 years of age may be able to explore the part of the Earth that is closest to them and begin naming the traits that make it special.

Ages 2–3

- Help your children understand physical regions by examining areas in your home. Is there an upstairs and a downstairs? Is there an eating area and a sleeping area? Eating meals, resting, napping, and sleeping in the same place everyday gives toddlers an initial sense that there are places with distinct characteristics in which you do certain activities.
- When you travel through your community or take trips, name the different regions—the shopping area, the playground, the church, synagogue, or mosque and your own street.

Ages 4–5

- Take a trip to a region that is very different from your own. A nearby park will do, or you can travel to a waterfront, mountain, or desert. If you can't travel, look at pictures in a book. Talk about how these regions differ from your own neighborhood and from each other.
- As you travel in different regions, look for familiar features. Do you see a school that other children attend? Is there a church or an office building?

What Are My Traditions?

Children learn about culture through language, art, music, and games. Toddlers and preschoolers love to listen to the sounds and patterns of their language and the languages of others.

Ages 2–3

- Fill your toddler's life with the songs, poetry, and sounds of the language of your culture. Play baby games such as "The Eensy Teensy Spider," "This Little Piggy," and "Patty Cake, Patty Cake," as you dress, bathe, and care for your toddler. Sing nursery rhymes and songs your parents sang to you when you were a child. By doing so, you are transmitting the language and culture of your family and perhaps your region and your nation.
- When you follow your own holiday customs or the customs of your own cultural heritage, you are teaching your toddlers and giving them something to compare others to as they get older.

Ages 4–5

- Take your children to visit the different political, residential, recreational, ethnic, and commercial regions of your hometown.
- Go to plays, movies, and puppet shows about people from different countries. These are often presented at libraries and museums. Some are also on television.
- Holidays provide an opportunity to learn about the customs of people around the world. You can use the library to discover how other people celebrate special days.
- If you have friends who are from different countries or have traveled or lived abroad, invite them over to talk with your children. If they have pictures, so much the better. What languages do they speak? How are their customs or dress similar to or different from yours?
- Learn a few words of another language. If there is someone in your neighborhood who speaks another language, teach your children how to say "hello" or "thank you" in that language.
- Learn about other cultures. Make different ethnic foods, take your children to folk festivals, or watch movies or shows on television such as Ali Baba or Heidi. Read stories about children in other lands.

What Do We Produce?

Introduce children to the ways that location can influence the way people produce and export goods.

Ages 2–3

- Take toddlers to work with you if possible, so they can see you producing either goods or services.
- Every community has some different economic sections. As you travel through these regions, name them for your children. "We are going to the mall to go shopping." "We are driving past the harbor where ships come from all over the world." Don't forget to point out the smells from the bread factory, the oil refinery, or the fisherman's dock.

Ages 4–5

- If you live near a river, lake, or ocean you might observe barges loaded with automobiles, machinery, or even garbage. Watch for trucks and ships carrying different materials and goods. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different ways goods are shipped.
- People travel and so do goods, clothing, and other materials. Look around your house for items made in different countries. Don't forget to check the labels on the foods you eat to see where they came from. Talk about how these things ended up in your home.

Conclusion

Geography is a way of thinking, of asking questions, and of observing and appreciating the world around us. It gives us tools we need to move about in the world, to make wise decisions about our environment, and to relate more meaningfully to people from other lands and cultures. You can help your children learn geography by offering them interesting and fun activities and by encouraging them to ask questions about their surroundings.

How you talk about and relate to the world is important to your children. Help your children build accurate mental images by using the right geographic terms. For instance, say, "We're going north to Maine to visit Grandma," or "west to California to see Tio Pablo," rather than "up to Maine," or "out to California." Many words used in geography are everyday words. But, like any other field of learning, geography has a vocabulary of its own. (See the glossary.)

Use maps as often as possible. As you plan outings and trips, as you watch television shows, or read stories to your children, keep a map close by. Children who grow up around maps and atlases are more likely to get the "map habit" than those who don't. So, get a good atlas, as well as a dictionary. Check public library used-book sales or yard sales for good buys. You can often get maps at little or no cost.

Helping young children learn geography has added benefits. While you and your children are doing the activities in this booklet, you are also:

- spending time together, reading, and doing things of interest to both of you.
- teaching vocabulary by linking words with experiences.
- introducing the language and rhythm of stories, songs, and poetry.
- helping your children express ideas through art, movement, and tactile activities.
- introducing mathematics and science, by promoting observation and inquiry.
- making children aware of their own customs and folklore.
- learning about the diversity and multicultural nature of our nation and the world.

The activities suggested are only a few examples of the many ways you can bring geographic thinking into your children's early experiences. We hope your family has fun doing them and that you develop many more activities of your own. Such simple, enjoyable activities can stimulate children's interest in geography and give them a basic understanding that lays the foundation for study in school.

ACORN
TREE
rocks
house

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Glossary

altitude
Distance above sea level(the surface of the sea). Tells you how high or how tall a mountain or other piece of land is; how many feet above the ground an airplane flies. The altitude of Denver, Colorado, is over 5,000 feet.

atlas
A book of maps. An atlas of the United States has maps of all 50 states and the U.S. territories.

archipelago
A group of islands close together in an ocean or sea. The Philippine Islands are an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean.

bay
A wide area of water extending into land from a sea or lake. San Francisco, California, is on the Golden Gate Bay.

boundaries
Lines indicating the limits of countries, states, or other political jurisdictions. On maps, boundaries are shown as straight lines, dotted lines, or going through mountains or water.

canal
A man-made watercourse designed to carry ships, goods, or water. The Suez Canal is in Egypt.

canyon
A large but narrow gorge with steep sides. Thousands of years ago, the Grand Canyon was formed by the rushing water of the Colorado River.

cape
A piece of land extending into water. The United States launches rockets from Cape Canaveral at the John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

cartographer
A person who draws or makes maps or charts. Cartographers made maps of the western United States using information from Lewis and Clark's expedition.

continent
One of the seven large land masses. The continents are North America, South America, Australia, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Antarctica. France is on the continent of Europe, and the United States is on the continent of North America.

degree
A unit of angular measure. A circle is divided into 360 degrees, represented by the symbol °. Degrees, when applied to the roughly spherical shape of the Earth for geographic and cartographic purposes, are each divided into 60 minutes. Each minute has 60 seconds. Degrees on a map help us locate places.

delta
The fan-shaped area at the mouth, or lower end, of a river, formed by eroded material that has been carried downstream and dropped in quantities larger than can be carried off by tides or currents. The Nile and Mississippi Rivers have deltas.

desert
A very dry land that has little rainfall and cannot sustain much life. There are few trees. The Sahara Desert in North Africa is very hot.

elevation
Measures how high land is. It is measured from sea level, which is at zero elevation. The elevation of Mount Everest is over 26,000 feet.

equator
An imaginary circle around the Earth halfway between the North Pole and the South Pole; the largest circumference of the Earth. It cuts the Earth into two equal parts, the northern and southern hemispheres. Australia is south of the Equator.

glacier
A large body of ice that moves slowly down a mountainside from highlands toward sea level. A glacier is a slow moving, frozen river of ice.

gulf
A large arm of an ocean or sea extending into a land mass. The Gulf of Mexico is west of Florida.

hemisphere
Half of the Earth, usually conceived as resulting from the division of the globe into two equal parts, north and south or east and west. The northern hemisphere is north of the equator, the southern hemisphere is south of the equator.

island
An area of land, smaller than a continent, completely surrounded by water. Cuba, Japan, and Great Britain are islands.

isthmus
A narrow strip of land that separates two bodies of water or connects two pieces of land. The Isthmus of Panama separates the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and connects South and North America.

lagoon
A shallow area of water separated from the ocean by a sandbank or by a strip of low land. A lagoon does not have waves like an ocean.

lake
A body of fresh or salt water entirely surrounded by land. Lake Como in Italy is a fresh water lake, but the Great Salt Lake has salt water.

latitude
Lines of latitude are imaginary lines that tell how far north or south a place is from the Equator. The lines measure the degrees north and south from the Equator. Zero degrees is the location of the Equator.

legend
A listing which contains symbols and other information about a map. For example, the legend on a map might show scratchy lines to indicate where the railroad tracks run.

longitude
Imaginary lines that run from the North Pole to the South Pole. The lines of longitude start at the Prime Meridian, in Greenwich, England. Longitude measures how far west or east an object is from the Prime Meridian.

mountain
A high point of land rising steeply above its surroundings. A long chain of mountains is called a range. The Andes Mountains are in South America.

oasis
A spot in a desert where water comes up from an underground spring and trees grow. People travelling through the desert often stop at an oasis for rest and water.

ocean
The salt water surrounding the great land masses, and divided by the land masses into several distinct portions, each of which is called an ocean. The five oceans of the world are the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic, and Antarctic.

peak
The highest point of a mountain. It is difficult to climb to the top of Pike's Peak in Colorado because it is so high.

peninsula
A piece of land extending into the sea almost surrounded by water. Florida and Italy are peninsulas.

physical feature
A land shape formed by nature. Deserts, mountains, and plateaus are physical features of Arizona.

plain
A large area of land, either level or gently rolling, usually at low elevation with very few trees.

plateau (or tableland)
An elevated area of mostly level land, sometimes containing deep canyons. From the top of the plateau you can see for miles around.

population
The number of people who live in a place. The population of China is over two billion.

prime meridian
An imaginary line running from north to south through Greenwich, England, used to measure longitude. The prime meridian is at zero degrees longitude.

range (or mountain range)
A group or chain of high elevations. The Alps is the name of a mountain range in Europe.

reef
A chain of rocks, often coral, lying near the water surface. Sometimes ships bump into coral reefs in the ocean.

reservoir
A man-made lake where water is kept for future use. So many people live in Los Angeles that they need several reservoirs to store enough water.

river
A stream, larger than a creek, generally flowing to another stream, a lake, or to the ocean. The Mississippi River flows from Minnesota to Louisiana and into the Gulf of Mexico.

scale
The way that mapmakers reduce the real size of cities, rivers, and mountains to sizes that fit on paper. On a map, the scale may show one inch equaling 500 miles. If one city is two inches from another city, the cities are 1,000 miles apart.

sea level
The ocean surface; the mean level between high and low tides. Geographers use sea level to measure the height of the Earth: Denver, Colorado—the mile high city—is a mile over sea level.

strait
A narrow body of water connecting two larger bodies of water. The scenery near the Strait of Gibraltar, which connects the Atlantic and Mediterranean Oceans and separates Europe from Africa, is breathtaking.

swamp
An area of low land that always has deep water and is usually overgrown with grasses and trees. (A marsh is temporarily or periodically saturated.) The Everglades in south Florida is a big swamp.

valley
A relatively long, narrow land area lying between two areas of higher elevation, often containing a stream. The San Fernando Valley in California is a valley that gets very hot in the summer.

volcano
An opening in the earth through which gases, lava, and hot ashes violently rush out, or erupt. Some volcanos are still active, while others are not. Hawaii was formed by volcanos, such as Moana Loa.

waterfall
Water that flows over the edge of a cliff or steep mountainside. Niagara Falls is made up of two waterfalls.

Glossary, in part, courtesy of Hammond, Incorporated.

Resources

Maps

Below are suggestions on where to go for free maps. You may have to go in person, or send a self-addressed stamped envelope in order to receive one. If you need help finding a telephone number or address, check at the reference section of your local public library.

- Many states have maps and information kits available free through their departments of tourism, which often have toll-free numbers.
- A number of foreign countries have tourist agencies (also at toll-free numbers) that will furnish free maps and other materials upon request.
- Look in the front of your telephone directory for local maps.
- Local transit authorities usually provide free maps of public transportation routes (e.g., bus or subway). Often, public libraries distribute such maps as a community service.
- Car rental companies.
- The federal government has hundreds of maps available. The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) handles the printing and sale of items produced by federal agencies. For a listing of maps for sale by GPO, contact the GPO bookstore in your area or the Superintendent of Documents, GPO, Washington, DC 20402 (phone: 202–512–1800). In addition, some agencies may furnish maps directly upon request.
- Maps from the U.S. Geological Survey, the federal government's civilian mapmaking agency, cover a wide range of areas primarily of the United States and its territories. Included are free teacher packets: *Map Adventures* (K–3) and *What Do Maps Show?* (upper elementary and middle school). For more information, call 1–800–USA–MAPS.
- Maps of more than 300 parks, scenic trails, battlefields, and historic sites under the care of the National Park Service. Contact the particular site or, if you want a single map, write to the U.S. Department of the Interior, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013–7127.
- A map of the United States showing the U.S. Wildlife Refuges. Write to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Refuges, 18th & C Streets NW, Washington, DC 20240. Or call 1–800–344–WILD.
- Maps of water recreation areas from the Army Corps of Engineers. Write to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Depot, 2803 52nd Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20781–1102 (301–394–0081).

Books

Try these easy reading or picture books for your chidlren. Your librarian can help you find other books related to geography.

Anderson, Lonzo. *Day the Hurricane Happened*. Story of what a family does when a hurricane rips through their island.

Anderson, Scorlar. *A Puzzling Day in the Land of the Pharaohs*. A classroom visits an exhibition called the Mysteries of Ancient Egypt.

Brenner, Barbara. *Barto Takes the Subway*. Barto lives in New York City. He and his sister take a trip on the subway.

Brenner, Barbara. *Wagon Wheels*. Three young black brothers follow a map to their father's homestead on the Western plains.

Brinckloe, Julie. *Gordon Goes Camping*. When Gordon decides to go camping, his friend Marvin tells him of all the things he will need for the trip.

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Good Night Moon*. A soothing bedtime story for very young children about the contents of a great green room.

Burningham, John. *Seasons*. A series of pictures that define the four seasons.

Burton, Virginia Lee. *Little House*. A country house is unhappy when the city with all its houses and traffic grows up around it.

Chonz, Selina. *Bell for Ursli*. A boy who lives in a tiny village in the mountains of Switzerland has an adventure when the spring festival comes.

Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius*. One woman's personal odyssey through life to fulfill her grandfather's wish that she make the world more beautiful.

Devlin, Wende and Harry. *Cranberry Thanksgiving; Cranberry Christmas; Cranberry Mystery*. A series of mystery-adventure tales set on the cranberry bog shore of Cape Cod.

Dobrin, Arnold. *Josephine's Imagination: A Tale of Haiti*. A story of a young girl and her adventures in the Haitian market.

English, Karen. *Neeny Coming, Neeny Going*. A story of life on Daufskie Island, one of South Carolina's Sea Islands.

Goennel, Heidi. *What I Eat, What I See, Wear and Live*. This series of cardboard books helps children learn that pictures represent real things.

Green, Norma B. *Hole in the Dike*. Retells the familiar story of the young Dutch boy whose resourcefulness, courage, and finger save his country from being destroyed by the sea.

Hoban, Tana. *Over, Under and Through, and Other Spatial Concepts.* A picture book on spatial concepts.

Kraus, Robert. *Gondolier of Venice.* The city of Venice is sinking into the sea, but Gregory, a proud gondolier, gets a clever and unusual idea to help the old city.

Lamont, Bette. *Island Time.* A parent and child board the ferry that takes them to their very special island on Puget Sound.

Lisowski, Gabriel. *How Tevye Became a Milkman.* A short tale, with illustrations of the Ukrainian countryside, based on the character also depicted in Fiddler on the Roof.

McCloskey, Robert. *Blueberries for Sal. Make Way for Ducklings. One Morning in Maine.* Favorites from an award winning children's book author. Each book describes a special journey and the difficulties in getting from one place to another.

Metaxas, Eric. *The Monkey People.* A Columbian folktale that takes place in a village in the Amazon.

Mizumura, Kazue. *If I Built a Village.* An idealistic picture of what a village, town, and city can be, ends with a small boy building with blocks.

Morrow, Suzanne Stark. *Inatuk's Friend.* A story of an Eskimo child who must move from one place to another.

Musgrove, Margaret. *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions.* Read and observe 26 African tribes from A to Z.

Peterson, Hans. *Big Snowstorm.* Illustrations and text picture events on a Swedish farm during a raging January blizzard.

Rockwell, Anne. *Thruway.* As a small boy rides along a thruway with his mother, he tells of all the things he sees.

Shortall, Leonard. *Peter in Grand Central Station.* Peter takes his first trip alone, but when he gets to New York, his uncle is not there to meet him.

Skorpen, Liesel Moak. *We Were Tired of Living in a House.* Four small children pack their bags and leave home to find a new and better house.

Slider, Debby. *Animal Signs.* A book of photos of animals with inset drawings showing the signing for each animal.

Spier, Peter. *People.* Explores the enormous diversity of the world's population. Looks at various cultures, homes, foods, games, clothing, faces, and religions.

Van Woerkom, Dorothy. *Abu Ali: Three Tales of the Middle East.* Abu Ali is fooled by his friends, tricks them in turn, and even fools himself in three humorous stories of trickery based on folklore of the Middle East.

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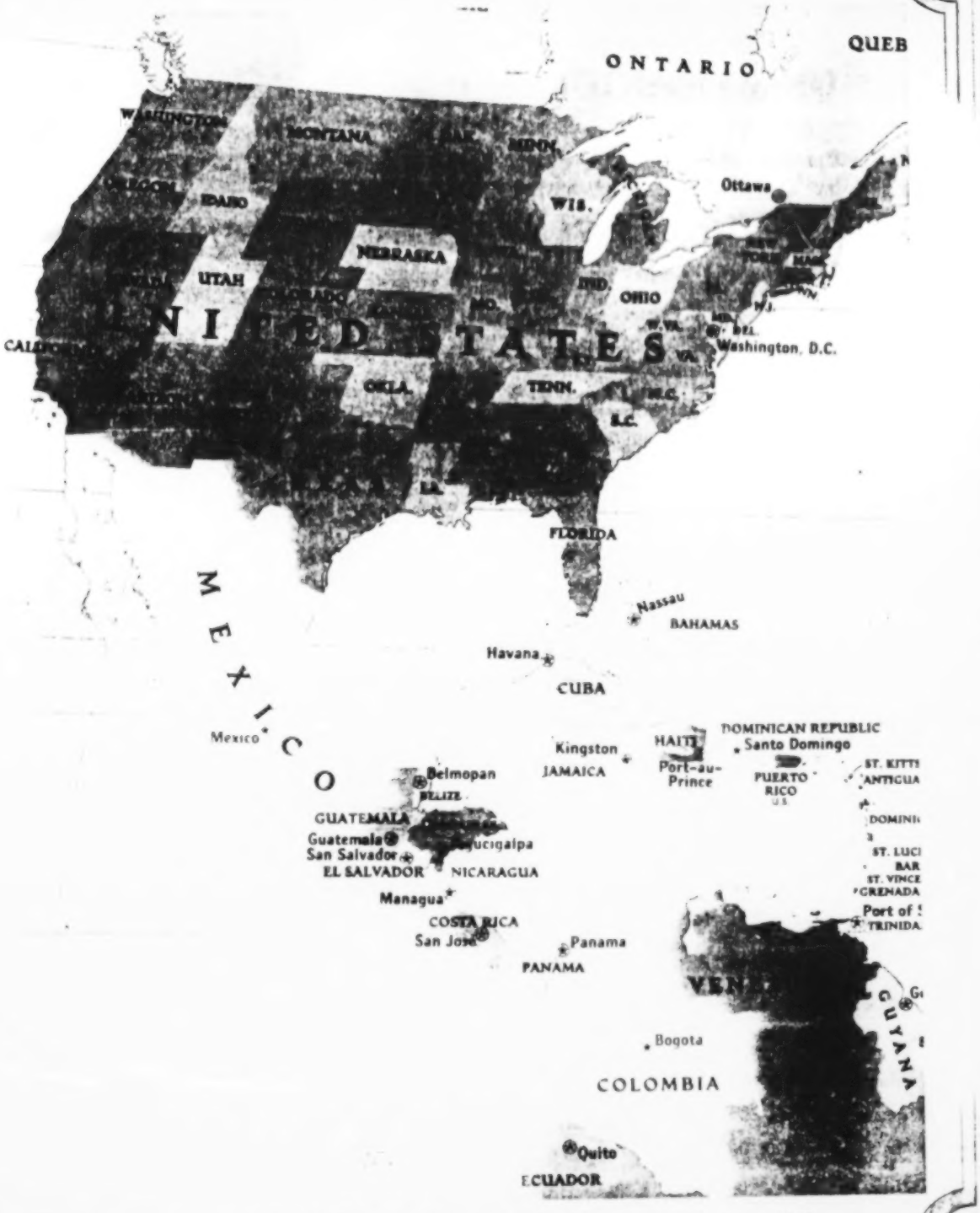

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What We Can Do To Help Children Learn Geography

- ✓ Read with them—especially about other places and other people.
- ✓ Keep maps and globes around the house and let your children see you use them.
- ✓ Look and explore. Go exploring with them and become aware of your surroundings.
- ✓ Ask, ask, ask. Ask questions about what you see. Ask about shape and color and why things are located in a particular spot.
- ✓ Talk about the weather and how it changes what you wear and what you can do.
- ✓ Celebrate your own cultural heritage.
- ✓ Experiment with other cultures. Eat their food and sing their songs.
- ✓ Talk about where ideas, products, and people come from.
- ✓ Travel in different ways. Bus, car, bicycle, subway train. Jumping, running, climbing.

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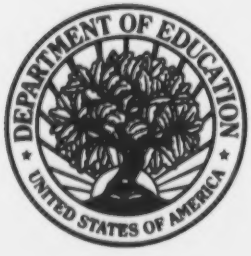

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